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ABSTRACT

Twenty girls were selected out of 110 enrolled in tenth-grade typing classes at San Bernardino High School for the two-semester experimental Business Speech program described in this report. In addition to taped language laboratory lessons on grammatical and syntactical items in standard English contrasted with nonstandard Negro English, instruction included pretests in audio discrimination and grammatical structure, oral drill, taped dictation tests, discussion by the teacher and small groups, role-playing, and practice in telephone skills and office procedures. The control group was taught with standard instructional procedures and no dialect study. The Business Speech students were "generally pleased" with taking dictation, role-playing, and discussion, but responded negatively to the taped lessons once the novelty interval had passed. They did not relate their change in speech production to the language laboratory lessons despite the fact that they could hear differences and see their grammatical error count go down in business letters. The author feels that the same material offered in a more informal fashion (small groups with a tape recorder) would achieve the same or better results, and could be adapted within a reorganized Business Speech class for other groups of nonstandard dialect speakers. (AMM)

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TEACHING STANDARD ENGLISH AS A SECOND DIALECT TO SPEAKERS OF NONSTANDARD ENGLISH IN HIGH SCHOOL BUSINESS EDUCATION

Final Report

by

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AL 002 375

San Bernardino City Unified School District
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SAN BERNARDINO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Instruction Office

FINAL REPORT

TEACHING STANDARD ENGLISH AS A SECOND DIALECT TO SPEAKERS OF NONSTANDARD ENGLISH IN HIGH SCHOOL BUSINESS EDUCATION

SELECTION AND TREATMENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Objective

To increase verbal skill in Standard English for Negro girls who plan to follow a Business Education major.

Time

The class met for one fifty-minute period every day for two semesters, a total of 178 days. The first semester began on 3 February 1969 and ended on 13 June 1969. The second semester began on 8 September 1969 and ended on 30 January 1970. Please note the twelve-week interruption in continuity because of summer vacation.

Materials

Sixty taped lessons on grammatical and syntactical items in Standard English which differ markedly from Nonstandard Negro English.

Language laboratory equipment consisting of console, earphones, language masters, tape recorders, etc., was used.

Only incidental use was made of the following listed texts since the major portion of the written material was prepared by the experimenter:

Gregg, Leslie, Zoubek, Students Transcript of Gregg Shorthand, Gregg Division, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York.

Steward, Lanham, Zimmer, Business English and Communication, Gregg Division, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York.

Supportive materials which reflected current problems and practices were contributed by local businesses.

Activities

Language Laboratory Activities

Pretest in audio discrimination and grammatical structure.

Taped lesson with student response checked by teacher at console.

Oral drill.

Taped dictation test, students wrote what they heard.

Reinforcement Activities for Lessons Originally Practiced on Tape

Discussion of lesson with appropriate explication by teacher. Please note all discussion and analysis of particular items was done after introduction and drill in the language laboratory.

Reinforcement Activities for Lessons Originally Practiced on Tape. (cont'd)

Taping of small-group discussion with tapes reviewed by group, erased at points of divergence, and redone in Standard English.

Role-playing using verbal skills studied. Emphasis on voice pitch, clarity of articulation, ability to respond graciously to curt questions and demands. Practice in walking, sitting, and good grooming.

Study of telephone skills, emphasis on correct office procedure, consideration, articulation, and thoughtful evaluation of the ways in which problems may be handled on the telephone.

Dictation read by teacher or students from Students Transcript of Gregg Shorthand, taken in longhand and checked by students for punctuation and spelling. Much small-group activity was used for proofreading materials to be submitted.

Reception and production of interoffice communications based on messages and problems imported from actual businesses.

Effective letter writing based on Part 9, Business English and Communication.

NOTE: The experiment was conducted at San Bernardino High School, and the language laboratory was installed for the opening of the Business Speech class in January 1969. In September 1969, the San Bernardino High School population was moved temporarily to the Pacific High School campus. Materials and equipment were stored pending a move in October to a new campus. In the process of the move, one filing cabinet containing part of the experimental materials was lost. The language laboratory installation was delayed until late in December, shortly before the end of the experiment.

Please note that no language laboratory work with students was done after the first 81-day period from 3 February through 13 June. In the absence of necessary equipment, radical changes had to be made in instructional procedures. Most of the activities which had been designated as reinforcement activities became primary activities as the emphasis was shifted to linguistic and cognitive competence in office problem-solving and business correspondence.

Additional Activities

Field trips to offices within the community.

Individual visits to observe secretaries in action.

Visits to class by executives and secretaries to discuss office procedures. Visitors were asked to present problems to the class and to help the girls to solve them in the manner used in each particular office.

STUDENT SELECTION

In January 1969, one hundred ten girls in the tenth grade typing classes at San Bernardino High School were administered a Recognition Test intended to determine their ability to recognize Standard English when it is presented in conjunction with similar items in Nonstandard Negro English. Validity and

STUDENT SELECTION (cont'd)

reliability of the instrument used is discussed under Evaluation Procedures.

Criteria for selection of students to participate in the experimental program included the following items:

IQ score of 80 or above.

Expressed desire to follow Business Education major in high school.

Raw score of 60 or below on Recognition Test.

Teacher recommendation.

Twenty girls were selected for the experimental program with some divergence from the criteria listed above. Nine of the participants recommended by teachers showed scores of two to ten points above the cutoff point on the Recognition Test. They were accepted on the basis of teacher insistence that these girls were unable to speak Standard English with sufficient fluency to function successfully in a secretarial position. This change in selection procedures was a mistake. Six of the girls with scores above 60 dropped the Business Speech course at the end of the first semester. Both the experimenter and the students felt the materials used and the major thrust of the course were inappropriate to the felt needs of these students. Two girls selected for the experimental group moved out of the school district; hence, by the beginning of the second semester the number still enrolled in the experimental class was reduced to twelve.

In addition to the original twenty girls selected for participation in the Business Speech experimental course, one girl was selected for each participant as her matched-counterpart in the control group. Once the experimental group was reduced to twelve, the control group was reduced automatically.

Difference in Treatment - Experimental Versus Control Groups.

The experimental group was enrolled in Business Speech and taught with the instructional procedures cited above. The control group was enrolled in sophomore and, later, junior English and taught with standard instructional procedures in those classes. The primary difference in treatment lies in the emphasis on comparative dialect study in Business Speech as offered to the experimental group in contrast with no dialect study in traditional English classes.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

THE RECOGNITION TEST - DISCUSSION OF INSTRUMENT USED

Recognition Testing

The primary evaluation instrument used was the Recognition Test prepared by the experimenter, Barbara P. Hagerman. Early in 1968, the test was prepared based on Nonstandard Negro English dialect information collected in San Bernardino which, it was hoped, might provide evidence of dialect interference at the recognition level. Seventy-six Standard English sentences were presented in multiple-choice questions. Each Standard English sentence was buried among three similar sentences written correctly in Nonstandard Negro English. The stated purpose of the test was to measure how well any high school student can recognize Standard English when it is presented in conjunction with Nonstandard Negro English. The hypothesis to be tested was that the Standard English native speaker would recognize only one of each of the four sentences as familiar to him and, therefore, would select it as correct; whereas the native speaker of Nonstandard Negro English might see two, three, or four sentences which he recognized as possibly correct and that this could lead to interference in his choice which is demonstrably dialect based.

Reading Grade Level, Validity and Reliability

All test items rank at the sixth grade reading level or below according to the Purdue Method for Determining Grade Level. Content validity was checked by William Labov and certain changes were made in accordance with his suggestions. The test was administered to ninth grade students in a predominantly Negro junior high school and to ninth grade students in a junior high school far from the Negro neighborhood. The alpha coefficient, developed by L. Cronbach of which the Kudor-Richardson coefficient of equivalence is a deviation, was 0.95.

Sample, Selection, and Other Information

The Recognition Test was administered to all sophomore Beginning Typing students in a San Bernardino high school. Fifty Anglo and fifty Negro girls were chosen from the sample by random selection. Total information included for statistical analysis was as follows: Ethnic Group, Recognition Test Score, Lorge Thorndike IQ, and Stanford Achievement Test Scores, Verbal and Nonverbal. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on the total information.

Results of Statistical Analysis

Results showed significant difference between ethnic groups on all dependent variables (F.=15.05, P.<.001); a composite of all dependent variable scores correlated significantly with the Recognition Test score (r.=.82). Thus, these data suggest it is possible to assign the subjects according to ethnic group on the basis of how well they recognize Standard English.

It is difficult for those of us who teach reading to accept conclusions based on IQ or reading scores because we do not trust the tests for a variety of reasons. We are particularly suspicious of the scores of poor readers since even the nonverbal tests require some reading. The following report of the results of the analysis of covariance should allay some of those doubts.

As stated above, an analysis of covariance shows significant covariation among IQ, verbal and nonverbal scores, and Recognition Test scores. By eliminating IQ, we can view the relationship of each remaining dependent variable with the main effect (Ethnic Group). A significant difference is found on ethnic group (F.=5.6, P.<.001); nonverbal and Recognition Test scores contribute most to this distinction.

These are not independent of verbal scores which have a mutually positive covariance with nonverbal (r.=.73). By eliminating the effects of verbal and nonverbal scores, a significant difference between ethnic groups remains (F.=669, P.<.001), showing the Recognition Test scores to contribute most to this distinction although the Recognition Test scores covary with IQ.

Verification of Hypothesis

The purpose of the test was to measure how well any high school student can recognize Standard English surrounded by Nonstandard Negro English. The hypothesis to be tested was the following: Will a Negro speaker of Nonstandard have more difficulty selecting Standard English from among nonstandard representations of the same sentence than his Standard English speaking, white agemate? If he does have more difficulty, the reason could be dialect interference. The data appear to support the conclusion, at least on the basis of this small sample. Fifty Negro girls showed a mean score of 55.23 with 14.09 standard deviation. Fifty Anglo girls showed a mean score of 67.96 with 6.70 standard deviation.

Verification of Hypothesis

The means in both cases are high, but a look at the standards of deviation is revealing. The Negro girls tested showed a first standard deviation range of 68 percent with scores between 70 and 40; the Anglo girls tested had scores which ranged between 75 and 61. It is this range in possible scores and the difference at the lower end which warrants particular attention. If dialect interference is a factor, then those girls who score below 61 on the Recognition Test are probably native speakers of Nonstandard Negro English.

TESTING - BUSINESS SPEECH

Test Administration

The Recognition Test was administered to both the experimental and the control groups in January 1969 and again in January 1970 at the conclusion of ten months (two semesters) of work with the experimental group. Members of the experimental group were paired with girls in the control group according to the following factors: grade in school, age, sex, race, IQ, percentile score on Test of Academic Progress (fall 1969), and raw score on Recognition Test.

Substantiation of paired groups was based on the following correspondences:

Age		15.6 to 16
Sex		Female
Race		Negro
IQ	Experimental Group Mean	91
	Control Group Mean	89
TAP Percentile	Experimental Group Mean	23
	Control Group Mean	18
Recognition Test	Experimental Group Median	53
	Control Group Median	52

Grade in school, age, sex, and race were the same for both groups; IQ mean difference was two points; TAP percentile ratings were five percentiles different; and Recognition Test raw score medians were one point different. We conclude that we are comparing two groups within the same population.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed on the raw scores of the Recognition Test by application of "t" test to determine the significance of difference on mean gains of paired groups $\sqrt{\frac{N(\Sigma D^2 - (\Sigma D)^2}{N^2 (N-1)}}$ with a degree of freedom of 11. Since our observed value of t (4.0) is greater than the .05 level of probability (2.201) and the .01 level of probability as well (3.106), we conclude there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups. Mean gain for the experimental groups was a raw score of 8.3 in contrast with a mean gain for the control group of raw score 3.9. The cutoff point for speakers of Standard English as established by the Recognition Test is a raw score of 61. The median of the experimental group is a raw score of 62; the median of the control group is a raw score of 55.

Conclusions

The hypothesis to be tested was that nonstandard dialect speakers can be helped to master Standard English by teaching Standard English as a Second Dialect in a language laboratory classroom. Despite the reduced size of the sample, the statistical analysis leads us to conclude that there is a significant difference in the ability to master Standard English as measured by the Recognition Test between the experimental and control groups. That is, nonstandard dialect speakers can be helped to master Standard English by teaching Standard English as a Second Dialect in a language laboratory classroom.

In the initial proposal, evaluation procedures included administration of Stanford Achievement Test, Form W, Advanced Partial Battery, Subtests on Paragraph Meaning, Spelling, and Language. This test was administered to both the experimental and control groups. Unfortunately, the tests were stored in a file cabinet which was lost during a move from the initial site of the project to the new campus. Considerable time was spent to no avail in an effort to find the missing file cabinet and its contents. We reluctantly submit that no Stanford Achievement Test results may be included in the final evaluation of the Business Speech experimental project.

ADDITIONAL EVALUATION PROCEDURES

In addition to formal evaluation, three informal procedures were used to measure proficiency in both competence and performance in Standard English:

Performance in continued speech, taped

Performance in written English

Competence in problem solving expressed in oral and written Standard English

Continued Speech was evaluated on a continuous basis through bimonthly taping sessions. The girls spoke informally for five-minute intervals. Initial tapes showed a mean of nine nonstandard grammatical items. Comparison of initial and final tapes gave the following results:

Ten girls demonstrated the ability to speak for five minutes on tape with no nonstandard grammatical or syntactical items.

Two girls spoke on the final tape with two nonstandard items each.

After listening to the tape, one of these girls asked to change the two nonstandard items; the remaining girl noted no divergence from Standard English.

Performance in written English was to have been measured according to comparison of initial and final composition samples. The initial compositions were lost during the move from one school site to another. Reference to lesson plans indicates that lessons based on experimenter evaluation of the initial composition samples included the following items:

Past tense -ed deleted

Third singular -s deleted

Plural -s deleted

Nonstandard forms of be, have, do

Multiple negation

Inversion of indirect questions

Confusion over past participle forms, along with minor items such as <u>mines</u> and use of ethnic slang

Although no comparison could be made because of the loss of the initial samples, certain improvements in production are reflected in the evaluation of competence leading to performance mentioned below.

Evaluation of competence in Standard English was measured through problem-solving which required oral and written communication. Girls were presented with office-related problems and directed to handle them as efficiently as possible. At the end of two semesters of study, each girl could perform the

ADDITIONAL EVALUATION PROCEDURES (cont'd)

following tasks in a manner acceptable to office practice while functioning in Standard English:

Relay information received by telephone, orally

Relay information received by telephone, in writing

Takes notes and compose interoffice communication memoranda

Compose business letters ranging in difficulty from simple response to a request for a catalog - to a complicated problem involving denial of a request and suggestions for future activity in order to maintain the relationship between the company and the correspondent

All girls were able to demonstrate proficiency in the first three categories. The last category, business correspondence, was the final project of the year. Eight of the girls wrote letters which, in addition to good business form, composition, spelling, and punctuation, showed no evidence of nonstandard grammar or syntax. Four of the girls wrote letters which, although they contained no nonstandard grammatical items, were below general office standards for spelling and composition.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Statistical significance is encouraging to the experimenter, but student attitude and suggestions for future classes are also important considerations. The girls enrolled in the Business Speech course were generally pleased with the experience. Their response to daily lessons involving taking dictation, role-playing, or discussion was good. In addition to accepting oral speech correction from their classmates, they carefully checked their work for punctuation and spelling and were readily amenable to suggestions for rewording written matter.

Response to the taped lessons, on the other hand, was negative once the novelty interval had passed. The girls objected to the discomfort of the ear-phones and said the drills were "boring." As both the teacher and the experi-menter, I believe that the Standard English patterns were, if not introduced at least reinforced, by the taped drills. The girls did not relate their change in speech production to the language laboratory lessons despite the fact they could hear differences on the taped informal speech samples and see the grammatical error count go down in business letters.

Final evaluations and suggestions for future classes in Business Spedch were written on the last day of the program. All of the girls mentioned negative reactions to the taped materials and the language laboratory even though, at that point, they had not been involved with the laboratory for six months.

STUDENT RESPONSE (cont'd)

All girls said they hoped the class would be continued: some suggested students who needed Business Speech. They also suggested, significantly for self-image, that the class no longer be restricted to Negro girls. They felt there were many students among the Anglo and Mexican-American school population who could use speech training.

COMMENTS

A language laboratory is perhaps the most efficient way in which to increase language competence and, hopefully, bring it into successful performance. I believe the same material offered in a more informal fashion, perhaps in small groups with a tape recorder, would achieve the same results if not better ones. The privacy of the language laboratory is apparently overridden by the necessity of sitting fastened to the lab by earphones. The girls seemed to enjoy listening to each other attempt to produce certain patterns and soon seemed to lose initial shyness when speaking before others. Although the Business Speech tapes were specifically intended for use with speakers of Nonstandard Negro English, I believe that enough universals exist among the three nonstandard dialects spoken in this area--Mexican-American English, Lower Socio-economic Anglo English, and Black English--to allow adaptation within a reorganized Business Speech class to include members of all three dialect groups. This will be particularly true if the tapes are presented informally and reinforcement material is presented as it was in the second semester of the experimental program.